

## Realistic Fiction

by



### *If You Love John Green . . . other great voices in YA fiction*

Best-selling American author John Green has become an official phenomenon in Young Adult fiction. *Proof?* He was named one of *Time* magazine's *100 Most Influential People* in 2014 – a rare accolade for someone who has published a handful of books about smart, precociously verbal teenagers. Green's writing has been a big deal in the United States for several years, but with the release of the film version of *The Fault in Our Stars* he has suddenly become a to-read author in the UK as well. By all means, DO read John Green's books. *The Fault in Our Stars. Looking for Alaska. An Abundance of Katherines. Paper Towns. Will Grayson, Will Grayson.* His subject matter is the classic realistic mix of friendships, family, falling in love and figuring out the complicated questions of self and identity, but the voice is inimitable. Since you probably do *not* need another recommendation to read John Green, TRAC would like to suggest some *other* American authors who are writing fantastic realistic fiction that you won't be able to put down.

"This story, about gender identity, thrums with pathos and heart.  
Readers will come for Eleanor & Park."  
—Sally Krawcheck, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Girl on the Edge and Other True Stories*



rainbow rowell

### *Eleanor & Park*

by *Rainbow Rowell*

If John Green is the current King of YA, then Rainbow Rowell is definitely one of the queens. In the last two years, she has published two astoundingly good novels: *Eleanor & Park* and *Fangirl*. Like John Green, she manages to write books that are critically acclaimed *and* best-sellers – both with teenagers and adults. Like John Green, she takes the ingredients of realistic fiction and comes up with something that is fresh and distinctive. No clichés or formulas in these books. She also writes the best-ever dialogue, witty and pitch-perfect.

*Eleanor & Park* is an unusual friendship/love story between the new girl in town (with plenty to hide) and the loner boy who, despite his own shy and self-protective tendencies, is drawn to her. This book has so much sweetness in it, but it is also gritty and real. Set in the semi-historical era of 1986, it describes a time when teenagers communicated their feelings and personalities through mix tapes and semi-private moments on the school bus.

**Reading and interest level: 13+** Genre: realistic; historical; family; bullying; romance; humour

**This book contains a few instances of strong language, mild sexual scenes and some emotionally disturbing content.**



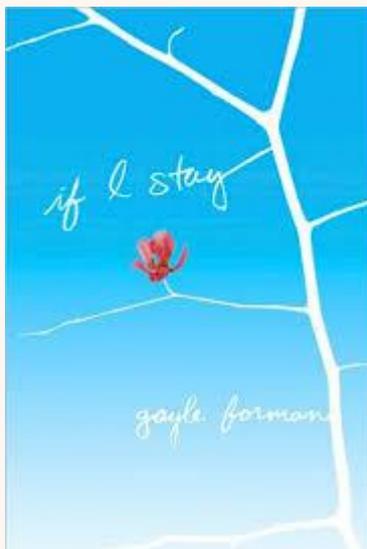
## *Fangirl*

by *Rainbow Rowell*

18 year old Cath: first year university student, twin, and fan fiction writer with reclusive tendencies. Cath has family problems and love interest problems, and spends way too much time in a Harry Potteresque fantasy world, but she also possesses a dry sense of humour and a strong sense of self. *Fangirl* describes the seductive power of a fictional world, and it creates that, too.

**Reading and interest level: 14+** Genre: realistic; family; friendship; romance; humour; fan fiction

This book contains a few instances of strong language, some mild sexual scenes, references to binge drinking and depictions of mental health issues.



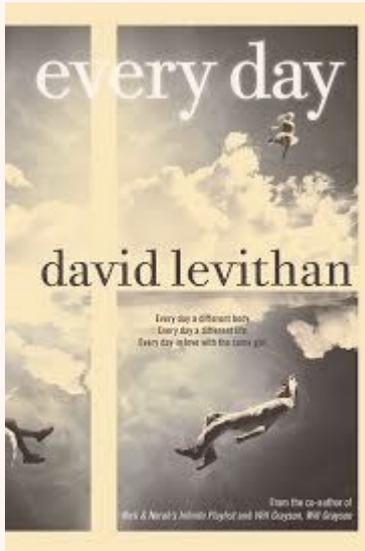
## *If I stay*

by *Gayle Forman*

If you aren't familiar with Gayle Forman yet, you will be soon. Like John Green, she has a big film release this summer: *If I Stay*. Interweaving flashbacks and the real-time of a near-death experience, *If I Stay* is a love story between two musicians: Mia, a cellist, and Adam, who plays in an "emo-rock" band. When a terrible accident occurs, Mia will be torn between Adam and her eccentrically wonderful (and most beloved) family. Emotionally gripping and definitely a tear-jerker, but all in the best possible way.

**Reading and interest level: 13+** Genre: realistic; family; romance; death; music

This book contains some emotionally upsetting content.



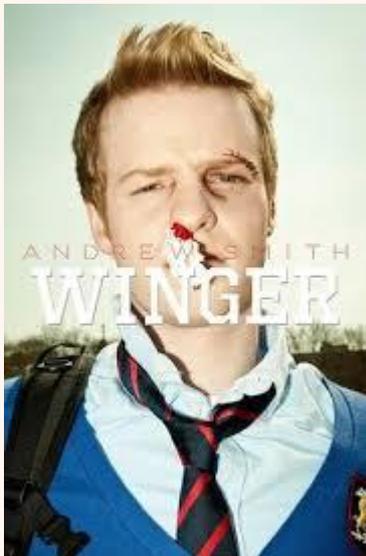
## *Every Day*

*by David Levithan*

Author David Levithan both edits and writes YA fiction, and he is publishing some ground-breaking work – particularly in the area of same sex relationships. This unusual love story “reads” as a realistic story, but it pushes beyond those boundaries with its central idea. A, the protagonist, inhabits a different body from day to day. He has no given family and no given name, yet he has an identity and self which stay fixed. When A falls in love with Rhiannon, he has to figure out whether it is possible to have a relationship when you are, literally, a different person every day. Unexpectedly philosophical and thoughtful, this is an unforgettable book.

**Reading and interest level: 14+** Genre: magical realism; romance; depression; gender identity

This book contains a few instances of strong language, mild sexual scenes and some emotionally disturbing content.



## *Winger*

*by Andrew Smith*

Ryan Dean West: gifted student, excellent athlete, lover of women, genius cartoonist.

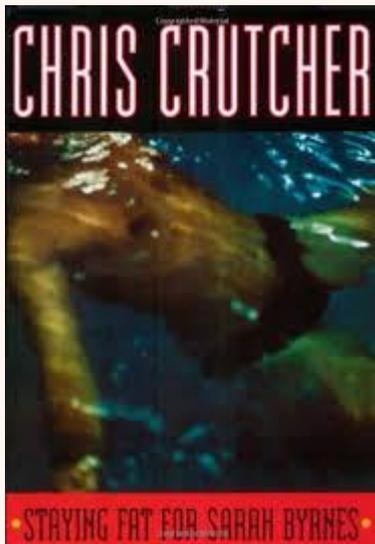
Ryan Dean West: 14 year old self-described “loser.” Hyperactive and prone to social gaffes.

Ryan Dean West: two years younger than everyone else, but looking for a level playing field.

RDW punches above his weight and so does this humorous novel, with unexpected serious and touching moments. The quantity of excellent cartoons edges this novel into graphic territory.

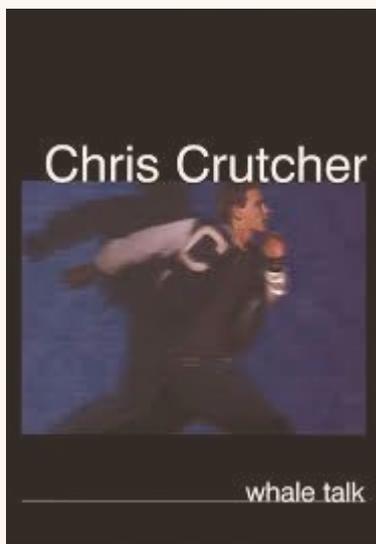
**Reading and interest level: 14+** Genre: realistic; sports; romance; friendship; bullying; sexual identity

This book contains lots of strong language, some descriptions of bullying and some emotionally disturbing content.



## *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*

by Chris Crutcher



## *Whale Talk*

by Chris Crutcher

Before John Green and Andrew Smith, there was **Chris Crutcher** – an award-winning, hugely respected YA writer for older teens. Known for his sports novels, and depictions of teenagers with difficult lives, Crutcher writes intense books that have a big intellectual and emotional pay-off. *Whale Talk* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* are two of his best. Crutcher's novels champion the underdog, and in different ways both of these novels are about how sport can transform feelings of self-worth and foster friendship amongst otherwise unlikely acquaintances.

**Reading and interest level: 14+** Genre: realistic; sports; friendship; bullying; emotional abuse

These books contain a few instances of strong language, descriptions of bullying and other emotionally disturbing content.



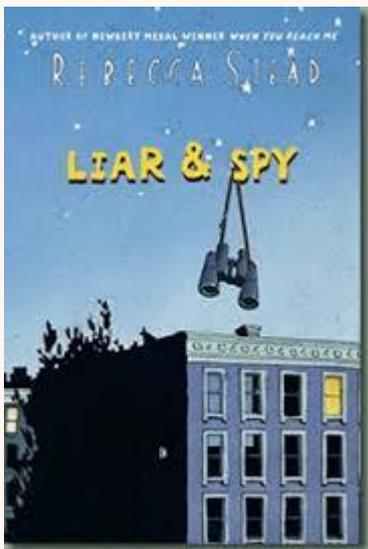
## *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*

*by Jesse Andrews*

One of the funniest and most profane books in realistic YA fiction, this novel features three of the most unlikely friends imaginable. They are united by filmmaking, cancer and really bad humour. Protagonist Greg Gaines is trying to get through life, not to mention his senior year of high school, by keeping a low profile; needless to say, he blows it. A Holden Caulfield for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Greg takes self-deprecation and creative bad language to the next level. Greg does not really want to feel genuine emotions, but he does in spite of himself – and so will the reader of this book. A fantastic choice for male reluctant readers.

Reading and interest level: 14+ Genre: realistic; friendship; humour; death

This book has lots of strong language and some emotionally upsetting content.

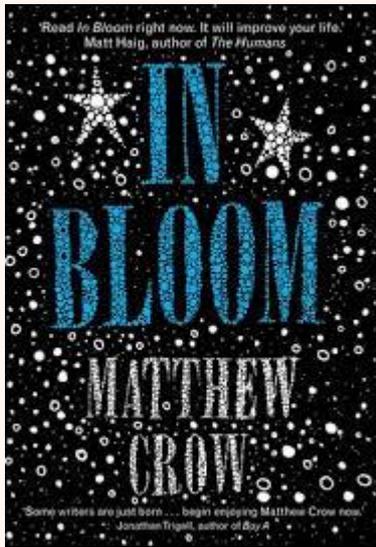


## *Liar and Spy*

*by Rebecca Stead*

This memorable book about friendship will appeal to younger readers, or anyone who appreciates excellent writing and a well-told story. When the book begins, main character Georges is having a hard time. His family has had to move, his mother is never at home and he is being bullied at school. Georges' only potential new friend is a home-schooled spy called Safer – who never leaves their apartment building. Full of humour and quirky details, this book will surprise and thoroughly engage its readers.

Reading and interest level: 12+ Genre: realistic; friendship; family; humour



## *In Bloom*

*by Matthew Crow*

This UK realistic novel will draw unavoidable comparisons to *The Fault in Our Stars* for the obvious reason that it is a love story between two teenagers who meet on the cancer ward. But when you factor in the Tyne and Wear setting, not to mention an eccentric cast of family characters, the outcome and reading experience is undeniably different. Humorous and moving in its own unique way, this novel deserves its own wide audience of readers.

Reading and interest level: 13+ Genre: realistic; friendship; family; romance; humour; death

**This book contains a few instances of strong language and some emotionally upsetting content.**

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